

This Week in Congress

October 17, 2005

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." Congress was out of session this week in recognition of the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur and Columbus Day. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Viewing Damage and Clean Up Efforts on the Gulf Coast

This weekend I joined other Members of the House Committee on Agriculture on a visit to Louisiana to view the damage and clean up efforts in the Gulf Coast region following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

While there, we visited a grain terminal, port facilities, food banks and distribution centers. We also met with representatives from the Department of Agriculture and Corps of Engineers and heard from Louisiana agriculture producers. We were able to see an aerial view of flood and hurricane damaged farmland and livestock.

Seeing firsthand the devastation of the Gulf Coast helped me more clearly understand the challenges facing farmers in the region. Many must start over completely. Crops are destroyed, barns are damaged and farm equipment is torn to pieces. It was important for me and other members of the House Agriculture Committee to witness the situation and come back to Washington, D.C., with an accurate picture as Congress works to continue rebuilding efforts.

Seventh "Partners in Conservation" Tour in Southwest Kansas

This week I completed my seventh "Partners in Conservation" tour to learn more about conservation efforts in southwest Kansas. My tour stops included -----Finney, Grant, Morton, Haskell and Seward Counties. Joining me on the tour was the U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment, David Tenny.

I have held regular conservation tours to study conservation practices in various parts of the state. This year's tour focused on a variety of conservation issues important to Kansas including water quantity and quality, wildlife habitat protection, grazing lands management and concentrated animal feeding operations. Other programs discussed included the Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Security Program and Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans.

Kansans have a vested interest in the wise use of our natural resources because we depend on them to make a living. With prairie and farmland stretching as far as the eye can see and resources such as the Ogallala Aquifer and the Cimarron National Grasslands, this tour was an opportunity to showcase successful conservation efforts in southwest Kansas.

I appreciate the efforts of all those who participated in the conservation tour this week, especially the Natural Resources Conservation Service in their organization of the tour stops. I would also like to thank the farmers and industry representatives who hosted us, as well as officials from Kansas State University Research and Extension, Groundwater Management District Three, Kansas Water Office, Kansas Water Congress, Kansas Center for Ag Resources and the Environment, Cimarron National Grasslands and the Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency.

The stops along the tour were met with warm receptions in each of the communities, making both days successful. I plan to share information from this tour with members of my subcommittee, the House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, as we begin discussions on the 2007 Farm Bill.

Discussing Rural Health Care at St. Francis Hospital in Garden City

I visited Garden City's St. Catherine Hospital this week to visit the facility and meet with the hospital's new president and CEO, Scott Taylor. Mr. Taylor has been with the hospital for four months.

One of the main issues facing St. Catherine Hospital is physician retention. I have worked hard in Congress to accomplish better physician recruitment and retention. Last year, I introduced reauthorization of the J-1 Visa Waiver program, which allows foreign-born but U.S.-trained physicians to continue living in the U.S. for three years in exchange for serving in a physician shortage area. Mr. Taylor reiterated the importance of the J-1 Visa Waiver program and how beneficial it is for rural hospitals. We talked about how rural hospitals often need some kind of incentive to keep physicians in the area.

Other issues we discussed included medical malpractice reform, the rising costs of utilities and fuel and the problems these higher costs create for hospital budgets.

Presenting Loren Lee Collins of Liberal with the Bronze Star

I was honored this week to present Loren Lee Collins with the Bronze Star. Joining us for the ceremony at the Good Samaritan Retirement Home in Liberal were his family and friends. Mr. Collins was drafted in 1944 and served in Japan and the Philippines until August 1946 with the Army Division First Cavalry. He remained in the Reserves until 1952. During his service, Mr. Collins was wounded by a bullet that grazed his knee.

Veterans have made great sacrifices so that our lives may be better. It was a privilege to present Mr. Collins with the bronze star. I greatly appreciate what he has done for our nation.

Speaking at the Kansas Alliance for Drug Endangered Children State Conference

On Friday, I addressed the Kansas Alliance for Drug Endangered Children State Conference in Hays. This conference included law enforcement, prosecutors, medical professionals, first responders, child protective service workers, and social service providers from across the state who are involved in assisting children and families affected by meth and illegal drug use.

One of the other problems associated with meth is the endangerment of children present in homes and areas where meth is being manufactured. I commend the community members who

are involved in the Drug Endangered Children program for working to find ways to protect children, the most innocent victims of the meth epidemic.

Supporting Bostwick Irrigation Farmers

This week I introduced legislation with Congressman Tom Osborne (R-NE) to assist farmers in the Bostwick irrigation district by reducing payments in times of drought. The Kansas portion of the Bostwick district is located in Republic, Jewell and Cloud Counties.

Farmers who irrigate are required to maintain payments to water districts despite receiving insufficient water. The legislation introduced by Moran, H.R. 4000, revises payment contracts between irrigation farmers and Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District No. 2, Webster Irrigation District No. 4, Nebraska Bostwick Irrigation District and Frenchman-Cambridge Irrigation District, which make up the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program.

Much of Kansas has been in drought for the last five years, and irrigators in these water districts have not been receiving adequate water. This legislation will ease the burden on producers by lengthening the payment period by 10 years. This will assist producers by reducing the amount of their yearly payment while maintaining their commitment to the irrigation districts. Similar legislation is expected to be introduced in the Senate.

Accepting Applications for Internships in Kansas, Washington, D.C. Offices

I am now accepting applications for congressional internships in my Washington, D.C., Hays, Hutchinson and Salina congressional offices. The internship program is a great opportunity for young Kansans to learn more about the legislative process and public service.

Applications are due by November 18, 2005, for spring 2006 internships and March 1, 2006, for summer 2006 internships. To apply for an internship, students should submit a completed application form, cover letter, résumé, college transcript and three letters of reference. The cover letter should explain their interest in the internship and the goals they hope to achieve from participation. Preference is given to students who are residents of the First Congressional District and have completed at least two years of college.

Application forms can be obtained on my website at: www.house.gov/moranks01/internweb.htm .

Visiting with Students and Officials at Kansas State University

I joined Kansas State University assistant professor Seok-Eun Kim's political science class this week for a discussion on alternative fuel sources, gas prices, education and the war. I was impressed with the group of K-State students and their questions and interest in current issues facing our nation. Also during my visit to the K-State campus, I met with President Jon Wefald for a discussion of higher education issues.

Attending Garden City Rotary Club Meeting

I was pleased to spend time with the Garden City Rotary Club at their meeting this week. The program of the meeting was a historical view of Kansas governors. Rotary is an organization dedicated to service and improving its members' communities, and we are fortunate to have many Rotary chapters in Kansas.

Promoting Gun Safety in Ford County

This week I joined Ford County Sheriff Dean Bush and Dodge City Police Chief John Ball to

continue highlighting the importance of gun safety. I applaud the efforts of these officials and their work with Project ChildSafe in the distribution of gun locks across the state. I encourage all gun owners to visit their local law enforcement agency to receive a free gun lock and help keep Kansas homes safe.

In the Office

In my office this week was Porter Loomis of Pratt to talk about downtown renovations. Also in was Leo Pauls of Emporia to discuss raising awareness and visibility of National Teachers Hall of Fame.

In my office this week for tours of the Capitol building were Dennis and Cristine Fisher of Hays with their daughter, Samantha, and Stan Downey of Newton with his sons, Zachary and Brendan. Jenny Meetz of Dighton and Stephanie Grecian of Overland Park were also in for a tour.

Very truly yours,

Jerry